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ORIGEN AND THE VALENTINIAN GNOSIS

BY

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Roughly speaking we can divide research on Origen into three stages. Eugène de Faye, Hal Koch and others stressed the philosophical aspects of Origen's teaching and studied his relation to Greek philosophy.[1] These books were valuable, even if at a later date the specific relevance of Middle Platonism was underlined.

The catholic renewal after the last world war led to the discovery of Origen as a churchman. Excellent books of Henri de Lubac, Henri Crouzel and so many other prominent scholars showed that Origen was primarily not a philosopher, but a theologian, whose source of revelation was the Bible.[2] The *Dialogue with Heraclides*, found at Toura, confirmed this view, because it portrayed Origen as an ecclesiastical "troubleshooter". To this new and enthusiastic approach we owe a renewed awareness of the impact of Origen's exegesis on the tradition of the Church, and even of the reformed churches.[3] But perhaps adherents of this school have sometimes gone too far in their zeal to vindicate the basic orthodoxy of the Alexandrian doctor.

If I am not mistaken, a new stage has already begun, which pays full attention to Origen in so far as he is a Gnostic. This is not to say that this aspect was always and completely neglected in former studies. Hans Jonas was so impressed by the affinities of Plotinus, Origen and Valentinus that he considered all three of them to be Gnostics.[4] But his concept of Gnosis was so vague that under his definition everything written between 0 and 500 A.D. could be labeled gnostic. Much more cautious

[1] E. de Faye, *Origène, sa vie, son oevre, sa pensée*, I–III (Paris 1923–1928). Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis* (Berlin und Leipzig 1932).

[2] H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit* (Paris 1950). H. Crouzel, *Origène et la "connaissance mystique"* (Paris 1961).

[3] Izaak Boot, *The allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, especially in the Netherlands* (in Dutch), diss. Utrecht 1971 (Woerden 1971).

[4] H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, 1 (Göttingen 1954) 171–223.

was the approach of Jean Cardinal Daniélou in his *Origène*. There he showed in detail how Origen was influenced at certain points by the strange vertical exegesis of men like Heracleon.[5] Moreover he distinguished between typology, of Jewish origin, presupposing a history of salvation with an aim and purpose and therefore strictly horizontal, and allegory which interprets details of the Sacred text as allusions to pleromatic "happenings". Even when he found himself under fire, His Eminence maintained his positions, thus paving the way for a more gnostic interpretation of Origen. As a matter of fact I do believe that in this respect Origen is much more a Gnostic than a Platonist. For in his spiritual world all kinds of happenings do take place, whereas among Plato's ideas nothing happens at all. Nor should we say that such a vertical exegesis is necessarily Greek, because the Stoics too gave allegorical interpretations of Greek mythology. The later Jewish Cabbalists gave a very similar interpretation of the Old Testament. More than alien influences it is a certain gnostic mentality which produces these hermeneutics.

Even if the above mentioned scholars met with stubborn opposition, we must follow the road they indicated. Origen has been studied as an isolated case, but from now on he should be studied in relationship to his intellectual and theological environment. We can and must do this from now on, because so many new texts have been discovered, which elucidate his Alexandrian background. In the first place there are the Bodmer Papyri, especially Papyrus 75, with the text of Luke and John (about 200 A.D.).[6] This is an excellent, scholarly text, anticipating the fourth century codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, made by competent philologists, who learned their job from the traditional Alexandrian pagan text critics. These texts reveal to us the existence of a circle of Hellenistic, but "orthodox" intellectuals in Alexandria before Clement and Origen, who had a certain predelection for Atticisms and identified the Christian agapè with the Platonic eros (the Egyptian text, represented by Clement, Pap. 46 c and Vaticanus reads 1 Cor. 13, 5: (ἡ ἀγάπη) οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ μὴ ἑαυτῆς — love does not seek *but* itself).

This, I guess, was the intellectual climate of Origen's father Leonides. It has now been shown by Michael Mees that Clement of Alexandria had already this pure, scholarly text before him: whatever deviates in

[5] Jean Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris 1948) 190–198.

[6] V. Martin–R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV*, 1–2 (Coligny 1961).

his works from this Egyptian text, should be ascribed to the free, extra-canonical gospel tradition of Jewish Christian origin which was current at this time in the Alexandrian congregation.[7] This fact shows that there were Jewish Christians in Alexandria, probably from the very beginning. Manfred Hornschuh has pointed out that Alexandrian Christianity has Jewish Christian origins.[8] This is relevant for our subject, because Origen knows Christians who think that God has a body.[9] It would be rash to dismiss this concept as the naive fancy of simple believers. The same is found in the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (17, 7); and the Jewish mystics of the time were familiar with the theme of the measuring of the body (of God). This was mainly a reaction against the abstract concept of God in Greek philosophy, which menaced the Jewish identity. In face of this both Jewish mystics and Jewish Christians used the most bold and provocative formulas to express their faith in a living personal God.[10]

Origen is very much opposed to this "Judaizing" literalism. And in this respect he agrees with the Gnostics against the Jewish Christians.

Other discoveries reveal the great pluriformity of Alexandrian Christianity before Clement and Origen. The codices of Nag Hammadi now turn out to contain not only gnostic books, but also writings which must be considered as pregnostic or definitely non gnostic. Among them the first place must be attributed to the text *Bronté* or *Perfect Nous*, recently edited by Martin Krause.[11] This book shows no signs of Christian influence and might have been written in Jewish Alexandrian circles in the first century before Christ. Here Sophia reveals herself, using again and again the introductory formula *Ego eimi*. This must have been inspired by the same device in the Isis inscription of Heliopolis, known through several copies found in the Hellenistic world.[12] It would seem that in Alexandria at least some Jewish circles were open to the warm mother religions of the Near East like that of Isis and integrated some of its colours into their concept of divine, hypostatic Wisdom.

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[7] M. Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien* (Bari 1970).

[8] Manfred Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* (Berlin 1965).

[9] *De princ.* 1,1,1 (Koetschau p. 16): *scio quoniam conabuntur quidam etiam secundum scripturas nostras dicere deum corpus esse.*

[10] Gershom Scholem, *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit* (Zürich 1962) 1–47.

[11] Martin Krause–Pahor Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI* (Glückstadt 1971) 122–132.

[12] J. Bergmann, *Ich bin Isis. Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisaretalogien* (Uppsala 1968).

Wisdom, who here styles herself as Logos, and as "the Wisdom of the Greeks and the Gnosis of the Barbarians", in her numinous paradoxes even dares to call herself the Saint and the Prostitute: "I am the saint (σεμνή) and the whore (πόρνη)" (p. 122, l. 18). We understand then how it came that Simon the Magician could say that his Helen, who was also Sophia, had been a prostitute in a brothel in Tyre. We also see that the view of the *Apocryphon of John*, according to which Sophia fell owing to her *libido* (*prounikon*), is traditional. All this was already there in Alexandria before the arrival of Christianity. Among the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi some fragments of the *Sentences of Sextus* have been identified. Owing to the excellent edition of Henri Chadwick we now know that the author of this writing, who lived in Alexandria some time before Clement and Origen, integrated Greek philosophical sayings into his collection, and must be considered as an orthodox Christian with encratitic leanings.[13] This leads us to the problem of Encratism within the Egyptian church. Clement in the third book of his *Stromateis*, is engaging in polemics against Tatian, Julius Cassianus and the local Encratites of Alexandria. This, however, does not imply that the Encratites had already been expelled from the Church then and formed a separate sect in Alexandria. Certainly this Encratism had very deep roots in Alexandrian soil: the concept of the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* that the "two must be made one" has its antecedents in Philon and in Platonic philosophy. Originally Encratism must have been an indigenous form of Christianity in Egypt, strongly hellenised and to be distinguished from Gnosticism.[14]

The most famous text of Nag Hammadi, the *Gospel of Thomas*, is, as I see it, not gnostic in origin, but encratitic. The text must have been composed in Edessa for several reasons, amongst which the use of the special term *monachos*, an equivalent of the Syriac *iḥidaja*, bachelor, which is not found in any Egyptian text of the time. Greek fragments of the work have been found at Oxyrrhynchus, which should be dated in the first half of the third century. This would mean then that the encratitic views of the *Gospel of Thomas* were known in Alexandria at a very early date and had found an echo there.

The *Teachings of Silvanus*, also found at Nag Hammadi, contain nothing

[13] H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics* (Cambridge 1959).

[14] G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle* (Leiden 1967) 82 ff.

that is specifically gnostic. It is suggested that this book was written in Alexandria in the course of the second century.[15] It proclaims an enlightened, Hellenistic Christianity, tinged with Stoic and Platonic lore. Thus it shows that a philosophical interpretation of the Christian religion was already to be found in Alexandria before Clement and Origen.

All this shows us that Egyptian Christianity in the second and third century was very open and was characterised by a pluriformity of currents within the one Church. Did it include also the various schools of Gnosticism?

There is no evidence whatsoever to show that Basilides and Valentinus, both of whom taught in Alexandria, had ever been expelled from the local Church during their lifetime. This is astonishing, because both taught the distinction between the demiurge and the highest God. It would seem that both were familiar with an already existing gnostic myth, very similar to the primitive form of the *Apocryphon of John*, which they christianised. The original doctrines of Basilides and of Valentinus, which can be reconstructed with some confidence, are christocentric and agree to teach that Christ awakens the unconscious Self in man. But this basic intuition was expressed in myths which in our eyes are very different from the biblical views. Nevertheless we are never told that they were expelled from the Egyptian Church. Nor do we know at what date this happened to their followers. As long as we compare Origen with Valentinus, it is clear that their systems are very different indeed. For Valentinus salvation is the result of a dialectical process, for Origen the will of man is the basic intuition of his philosophy. But if we take into account that within the school of Valentinus a certain evolution has taken place, the problem does not admit of such a clear-cut solution anymore. There has been a way from Valentinus to Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen. The transition is much more gradual than a phenomenological comparison can discern.

The school of Valentinus had split into an Oriental section, to which Theodotus belonged, and a Western or Italian branch, headed by Ptolemy and Heracleon. Whereas the Eastern school remained remarkably faithful to the teachings of the master, the Western school introduced many new elements into the primitive system. Although the views of Heracleon were not identical with those of Ptolemy (in fact they differed more than

[15] J. Zandee, Die Lehren des Silvanus. Stoischer Rationalismus und Christentum im Zeitalter der frühkatholischen Kirche, in M. Krause, *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* (Leiden 1972) 144–155.

earlier scholars supposed) these great doctors had a basic tendency in common.

They had a greater sympathy than Valentinus for the catholic church, or as they would have said in their very efficient technical terminology, they had a higher appreciation of the psychic element.[16] Therefore they held that catholics, ordinary churchgoers who lived by faith without Gnosis, could be saved too. Of course this is completely against the logic of the system, according to which the *spirit* that got lost in matter and thus caused a split within the deity, has to return to its origin in order to restore the balance of the Pleroma. At the cost of consistency Ptolemy and Heracleon taught that the "psychics", if they had done good works, would live on ever after at the entrance of the Pleroma. In accordance with this principle they taught that Christ had not only a human *spirit* (as Valentinus did) but also a *soul* and a psychic *body*. Whereas Valentinus had stressed that the demiurge was the origin of death, Ptolemy was of the opinion that the demiurge was not evil, but just. We only have to read Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, on the relative value of the Old Testament Law, to see to what extent he and Heracleon were approaching the catholic positions. The works of Valentinus, Theodotus, and Ptolemy were known to Clement of Alexandria. Origen had the commentary of Heracleon on the fourth gospel at his disposal. We must assume that representatives of the Eastern and the Western, Italian school of Valentinianism were present in Alexandria at that time. Even more important is that both Alexandrians must have been familiar with their opponent's concept of the Church, consisting of both pneumatics and psychics. This view of Ptolemy and Heracleon anticipated to a large extent the concept of Origen, according to which the Church was primarily a "commune" of true Gnostics with an appendix consisting of the faithful. The agreement will be clearer if we remember that according to Saint Paul *all* Christians were pneumatics.

The agreements between Heracleon and Origen would be still more numerous, if we could attribute with certainty the last writing of the Jung Codex to Heracleon himself. This contains an authentic description of a gnostic system, starting with the origin of the Pleroma in God, telling about the fall of one of the Eons, which puts into movement the world process, describing the coming of Christ to save both the pneumatics and

[16] Manlio Simonetti, Psychè e psychikos nella Gnosi valentiniana, *Rivista di storia e litteratura religiosa* 2 (1966) 1–47.

the psychics and ending with a picture of the final consummation. When the Jung Codex was discovered, on May 10th 1952, the editors H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, basing themselves upon part of the material (the rest turned out to be in the Coptic Museum in Cairo), have given their reasons for supposing that this very profound and very difficult work had been written by Heracleon.[17] Can this provisional hypothesis be maintained after so many years, now that the book is known almost completely and has been published in part?[18]

Let me be clear. I do not for a moment believe that this so called *Tractatus tripartitus* consists of three different treatises, to be disinguishd by differences in choice of words and in style. The text most clearly is a unity, like the Valentinian source in the first book of Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*. Nor would this hypothesis have been propounded, if its author would have known, that there has been an author named Irenaeus whose works contain valuable information about the Valentinian Gnosis.[19] Nor would I be ready to discuss the possibility that Valentinus himself wrote these treatises. It is only too clear that this writing originates in the Italian school of Valentinianism, which differed considerably from the founder. And I do not think it necessary to expound that Irenaeus' sources reflect the views of Ptolemy and his pupils and simply are *not identical* with the newly found book, though they contain a striking parallel to it. Such dilettantic errors we can dismiss without much ado.

However, the problem is that this extremely difficult book can be read in different ways. There are many contacts with the views of Heracleon, and sometimes with Heracleon only. On the other hand there are also differences. More disturbing is the fact that the *Tractatus tripartitus* sometimes contains doctrines and concepts different from those of Ptolemy: until now we believed that the systems of Ptolemy and of Heracleon were virtually identical. That the writing reflects the views of the Western school of Valentinianism and more specifically those of the school of Heracleon, is completely clear. Future critics may decide whether the authorship of Heracleon can still be maintained. For the moment we provisionally accept this hypothesis and speak in the following text about Heracleon, where the author of the fourth treatise of the Jung Codex is

[17] H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, Le quatrième écrit gnostique du Codex Jung, *Vigilae Christianae* 9 (1955) 65–102.

[18] *Tractatus tripartitus*, Pars I (Bern, Francke Verlag, 1973).

[19] R. Kasser, Les subdivisions du Tractatus Tripartitus, *Le Muséon* 82, 1–2 (Louvain 1969) 101–121.

meant. In my commentary I have given several examples of how near this writing comes to Origen. From these I choose a few items now, which are essential: 1) the eternal generation of the Son; 2) free will as the cause of the Fall; 3) Pronoia and Paideusis.

I. The Trinity

Valentinus seems to have taught that the Ground of being is a *quaternio*. Irenaeus (1, 1, 1) puts it in the following way:

> "They say that in invisible and unutterable heights a perfection was pre-existing. Him they call "Un-ground" (*proarchè*) and "Fore-father" (*propatōr*) and Depth ... With Him was Idea, whom they also call Grace and Silence. And once this Depth conceived of the idea to bring forth the origin of all. This emanation, which he thought to bring forth, was like a sperma. And this he laid down as in a womb in Silence, who was with Him. And she, conceiving the seed and having become pregnant, gave birth to Nous and Alètheia. From these emanated the other eons of the Pleroma. This is the first and original Pythagorean tetraktus, which they also call *root of all*."

Valentinus seems to follow here the pattern of the myth contained in the *Apocryphon of John*, according to which Barbelo, the female companion of God, is "the womb (*mètra*) of the all" and the (androgynous) Father-Mother (*Metropatōr*).[20] Modern editors have so little awareness of the mythological overtones of these texts, that they translate *mètra* with "mother" and *Mètropatōr* with "Grandfather".

This obliges us to state that the imagery is incredibly crude. If Gnosis strives after vision, then certainly that of Valentinus is the most shameless vision recorded in the history of mankind. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the treatise of Heracleon. The Ground of being is God, a personal God notwithstanding all negative predicates. Heracleon and Origen have in common that their concept of God remains strictly personal, even if they use the Platonic categories to express His transcendence. Because God is Father in the real sense of the word, he is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. From their mutual love a third hypostasis is born, enigmatically called Ekklesia. But from the *Pastor of Hermas* we know that the Holy Ghost is sometimes revealing itself in the shape of the Ekklesia (*Sim.* 9, 1, 1). Therefore we may say that Heracleon teaches an ontological and eternal Trinity. We see then that the catholicising tendencies in the Western school of Valentinianism went as far as

[20] S.Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis* (Copenhagen 1963) 53, 5.

to replace the *quaternio* by a *trias*. But this also means that the Gnosis of this school was much nearer to Origen than the original doctrine of Valentinus. Whereas it was usual to oppose the ideas of Origen to those of the Gnostics, we now see that in the second half of the second century the transitions had become so gradual as to become almost imperceptable.

In this perspective Origen is the consummation of gnostic developments. Just as Valentinus christianised a non-christian gnostic system, so Heracleon christianised Valentinus and Origen in his turn Heracleon.

It certainly will be objected that this vantage point does not explain the whole Origen, who also was a churchman opposed to heresy. This is certainly true. But my vantage point certainly helps to understand better the system of Origen, which has an even greater affinity with Valentinian Gnosis than could be established before the discovery of the Jung Codex.

II. The Fall

From a psychological point of view the Valentinian myth of the Fall is extremely profound. Whereas in the *Apocryphon of John* the Fall is due to *libido* (*prounikon*), Valentinus ascribes it to the *hybris* (*tolma*) of Sophia, who desires to penetrate into the eternal mystery of God. This reflects the situation of spiritual man on earth who should not seek the *unio mystica* as long as he is immature, but who must expect the revelation which will come in God's time. There is no instant-nirwana, no shortcut to Gnosis.

The story is even more impressive, if we see it in the light of the philosophy of that time. Posidonius had discovered the principle of wholeness: a being has its essence and function in an organic and corporate whole. Such a *holon* is the Pleroma. The *tolma* of Sophia is the desire to isolate herself from this whole body and to act on her own. This means that the *principium individuationis* leads to the fall.

It was thus that Plotinus understood the myth. And he accepted it during a certain period of his career. According to him the fall of the soul is due to the *tolma*, the hybridic desire to be an isolated self.[21]

There is however another aspect, which gets lost when we demythologise and actualise too fervently and do not take the manner of thinking of the Gnostics as seriously as it deserves. According to Valentinus

[21] Plotinus, *Enneades* 4, 7 (2), 13, 11; 5, 1 (10), 1, 4. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge 1965) 24.

the longing for God started among the eons around Nous and Alètheia, like a sort of "focal infection", which became an abcess and burst out in Sophia, *ut solent vitia in corpore alibi connata in aliud membrum perniciem suam efflare* (Tertullian, *Adv. Valent.* 9). This then means that evil is the result of a process, a moment in the "explication" or "explicitation" of the Divinity into its different aspects. For Valentinus held that the eons were *sensus et affectus, motus* within the Godhead itself (*Adv. Val.* 4). Evil then is a byproduct of evolution and emanation, as in Jewish mysticism and German idealism.

Tertullian tells us that Ptolemy, one of the leaders of the Western school, had changed the views of Valentinus: for him the eons were *personales substantiae, sed extra deum determinatae* (*Adv. Val.* 4). Until now we had no evidence to confirm this report. For in the documents from Ptolemy and his school there is no certain indication that this distinction was made. Nevertheless the statement of Tertullian must contain some truth. For in the *Tractatus tripartitus* this tragic concept is completely absent.

There the eons have a free will (69, 26). More important still, also Sophia, the last eon, here called Logos, has a free will. And this *autexousion* was for Sophia the cause that she did what she willed, without anything restraining her (75, 35–76, 2). This, of course, is in strong agreement with the teaching of Origen, according to whom the free will of one spiritual being, who was followed by all others but one, was the origin of the Fall and of the subsequent creation of the world.

It could be objected that among the many Middle Platonists who thought or did not think about the fall of the soul from its celestial realm, there was one, Albinos, who according to Iamblichus said that the soul fell because of its *autexousion*.[22] Moreover it could be supposed that this concept influenced both Heracleon and Origen.

But even if it could be established that both Heracleon and Origen knew Albinos, this answer would be very unsatisfactory. For Albinos this question was so unimportant that he did not mention it at all in his *Didaskalikos*. Moreover Albinos was not familiar with the concept of a Pleroma consisting of eons or the related concept of a realm of spirits. Such a stress on Greek influence would obscure the real issue of what was happening here.

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[22] Stobaeus 1,375. P. Kübel, *Schuld und Schicksal bei Origenes, Gnostikern und Platonikern* (Stuttgart 1973) 20.

When one attributes the fall to free will, one has solved the problem '*unde malum*' in a very specific way. Evil then becomes a sin or the consequence of sin, for which ultimately man is responsible. It has always been assumed that Origen made the *autexousion* the leading idea of his system in opposition to the gnostic concept of automatic salvation for the few. It now transpires that there was a precedent for this in Gnosticism. It may even be that Origen took this idea from Heracleon. For if the idea of free will was widespread in Hellenistic and Christian circles, the specific view that the worldprocess is due to the free decision of one spiritual being in the beyond cannot be attested elsewhere than in Origen and the *Tractatus tripartitus* of the Codex Jung. Here evil is no longer a by-product of evolution, but due to a contingent decision of a spiritual being. It is true that this is only one side of the coin. The author of the new treatise seems also to have known a sort of *felix culpa*. According to him it is not fitting to accuse the movement of the Logos, because this movement is the cause for the "dispensation" which was destined to come about, in other words this passion of Sophia was instrumental in bringing about the worldprocess (77, 6–11). It was not without the will of God that Sophia had been engendered, nor without Him that she went forth to penetrate into his Being, but on the contrary God had brought her forth in order that, through her intermediary, those would come into being of whom He knew beforehand that they would have to come into being (76, 23–30). It would seem then that Heracleon has combined free will with a strictly supralapsarian point of view.

III. Pronoia and Paideusis

In the new treatise the importance of the demiurge is minimal. This is astonishing if we remember the intense hate in the *Apocryphon of John* against Jaldabaoth, curious mixture of Aiōn, Zervan and Jahweh. Nor is this animosity alien to the other Valentinian sources: in the *Gospel of Truth* the demiurge seems to have been identified with *planè*, the Error which kills Christ (18, 24). In the *Tractatus tripartitus* Sophia-Logos uses the demiurge as her hand, through which she creates the visible world, and as her mouth, through which the prophesies are spoken (100, 30–35). Behind the scene it is Sophia who directs the universe and the universal history towards the coming of Christ.

Mankind is said to have gone through the Inferno of materialism, its hylic or Hellenic phase, and through the Purgatorio of religion and ethics, its psychic or Jewish phase, before the decisive pneumatic phase of Gnosis

and freedom was inaugurated by Christ.

All this is held to have been necessary. Soul and matter are necessary to form the spirit:

> "They came into being on behalf of those who needed education and instruction and formation, in order that the smallness should receive growth, little by little, as by means of a reflected image" (104,20–25).

It is even said that evil and death are part of this grandiose plan of education, because they lead to eternal life. This too has been predestined by the providence of Wisdom.

> "The Spirit has appointed this (short time of death), when he considered in the beginning, that man should receive this greatest experience of what is evil, which is death, which is ignorance concerning the end of all things, in order that he, after he had received the experience of all bad things, which originate from this and after the losses which originated from these things, and everything which is bad, should participate in the highest good, which is eternal life" (107,26–108,2).

In this the history of mankind repeats the history of the Pleroma. God is said to be the cause of ignorance as well as of Gnosis. He wants the eons to come to the experience of ignorance and its pains: they should taste evil and should train themselves in it (126, 6–34).

Henri-Charles Puech spoke about the absolute optimism of the author of this writing. How far are we here from the tragic experiences of other Gnostics, from their abhorrence of evil and their certainty that God is not the originator of evil. Everything is good here, everything is predestined and predetermined, tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles.

Such optimism can also be found in Origen. This shows that the latter's roseate views are not strictly personal, not a consequence of his castration which is sometimes said to lead to a highminded ideology. More specifically Hal Koch has shown that Pronoia and Paideusis were the keywords of Origen's system. And Koch thought he could show the origin of this concept in the philosophy of the time. We may ask whether such an interpretation does justice to the importance of the subject. Recently Wolf-Dieter Hauschild has shown that the concept of formation by the Spirit has Jewish and prechristian origins. Already in the Dead Sea Scrolls we find that the Spirit of God forms the spirit of man. This tradition was taken over by various Christians. So Tatian can say that the Spirit saves the soul, thus making of the Holy Spirit a second Saviour. The Valentinians elaborated the same tradition: according to them the Grace of the Spirit gave the formation of Gnosis to the spirit of man,

who thus became consciously what he was already, a pneumatic. Origen also knows the tradition of the formation by the Spirit. He engages in polemics against the Valentinian idea, that the pneumatic is saved by nature, but also according to him through the formation of the Spirit the pneumatic is not a "new man", but becomes what he originally was, pneumatic.[23] Both concepts are very much akin. To a certain extent Origen may have been influenced by Valentinianism. If we admit, as we ought to do, that the history of Valentinianism is an important part of the history of dogmas, the old thesis of Hellenisation loses much of its force.

This is not to say that all influence of Greek philosophy is to be excluded. Especially the Hellenic concept of Paideia could be integrated easily both by Valentinus and Origen, once they admitted the Jewish idea that the Spirit forms the spirit. But nowhere in Greek sources, not even those of Middle Platonism, we find a systematic philosophy of history comparable to that of Heracleon. When we study this alongside the system of Origen, we must admit that Origen is much nearer to Gnosis than to philosophy.

And this leads us to the last question: what, then, is the essential difference between Heracleon and Origen. In my article on the concept of man in the Valentinian Gnosis, published in 1948, I defended the thesis that the Gnosis of Valentinus was not primarily a philosophy of identity, but a theology of grace and predestination.[24] In this context I quoted Tertullian who expressly said that spirit according to the Valentinians is not a part of human nature but a gift of Grace.[25] This means that the experience of Grace led the pneumatic to the discovery that he was elect and had a spirit sleeping unconsciously in him. The experience of grace was primary: its rationalisation into a theology of predestination and the ontologisation of the spirit were secondary.

In *De principiis* 3,166,4 (Koetschau p.222), Origen, discussing the well-known passage in the prophet Ezekiel (11,19–21) about "the hearts of stone" and the "hearts of flesh", says the following:

"And if we do not do something in order that we get "the heart of flesh", but

[23] Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch* (München 1972) 126.

[24] G. Quispel, La conception de l'homme dans la Gnose Valentinienne, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1947 (Zürich 1948) 249–286.

[25] Tertullian, *Adv. Valentinianos* 29 (Kroymann III, p.205): *spiritalem ex Seth de obvenientia superducunt iam non naturam sed indulgentiam, ut quam Achamoth de superioribus in animas bonas depluat.*

> if this is the work of God (alone), it will not be our work to lead a virtuous life, but exclusively divine grace (πάντη θεία χάρις).

I am in no doubt that the views here refuted were held by the Valentinians. It was they who proclaimed the *sola gratia*. And Origen denies this.

Now nobody will doubt that the Valentinian system, derived as it was from a non-christian Gnosis like that contained in the *Apocryphon of John*, was not adequate to express this basic intuition. But my point is that Origen, out of sheer opposition to the Gnostics, did not find a solution that is more acceptable to Christian theologians. This becomes exceedingly clear, when we see which consequences this doctrine has in eschatology.[26]

Origen denies the second coming. He rejects the belief that Christ will come back on earth to found here his Kingdom. He directs himself against some Christians who believe that in the end "their" city Jerusalem will be rebuilt (*De princ.* 2, 11, 1; Koetschau p. 184). This seems to imply that his opponents here were Jewish Christians, who had preserved the millenarian views of their ancestors. Origen rejects this concrete eschatology just like the Valentinians. His own solution seems to be, that the bodiless spirits return to their original equality.[27] This also comes very near to the Valentinian concept.

With this difference, that even in the eschatological situation the spirits preserve their freedom. And this principle of needs leads to the view, more Indian than Gnostic or Christian, that again and again a new worldprocess will start and that one world will succeed the other without end. Valentinian Gnosis, for all its eccentricities, had preserved the idea that time must have a stop. The concept of free will led Origen to the opposite idea.

We see then that the basic issue between the oldest schools of Christian theology was about grace and free will, a debate, which was to be continued throughout the millennia.

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[26] Paul Kübel, *o.c.*, 100.

[27] F. H. Kettler, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes* (Berlin 1966) 25.